



# United States Department of the Interior

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Channel Islands National Park  
1901 Spinnaker Drive  
Ventura, California 93001

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1.A.1 (L76) – CHIS

January 15, 2015

Address

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Dear Addressee:

Channel Islands National Park has prepared an Environmental Assessment, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. The proposed project is to eliminate non-native Argentine ants from Santa Cruz Island. We have considered alternatives and evaluated the environmental effects of the proposed action. At this time, we are seeking review and comment from governmental agencies, scientists, organizations, and the general public regarding our evaluation.

### *Background and Project Purpose*

The purpose of this project is to further the protection and restoration of the naturally functioning ecosystem of Santa Cruz Island through the elimination of non-native Argentine ants. Santa Cruz Island is one of five islands within Channel Islands National Park. The NPS owns the eastern 24% of the island and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns the western 76%. Both NPS and TNC will jointly carry out this project in keeping with our history of working together to address ecological restoration on Santa Cruz Island.

Action is needed because the Argentine ants have spread significantly since their accidental introduction to the island, thought to have occurred in the 1960s. Since their initial discovery in two locations in 1996, the ants have established in two additional locations and increased the size of each colony. The estimated area of treatment, which includes a 50 meter buffer zone beyond detections of Argentine ants, is 1200 acres.

Argentine ants can have significant impacts on the functioning of an ecosystem, because of their strong competitive ability and broad diet. Argentine ants impact the native invertebrate community through direct predation, competition, interference, and egg predation. Native ants are particularly vulnerable and are largely eliminated in the presence of Argentine ants. This impact has been observed on Santa Cruz Island.

### *Project Objectives*

The objectives of this project include:

- Prevent additional introduction or human-assisted spread of Argentine ants on Santa Cruz Island
- Eliminate current infestations of Argentine ants

### *Laboratory and Field Research*

The park and TNC have worked with University researchers, non-profit organizations, and government scientists to develop and test methods for Argentine ant control or elimination on Santa Cruz Island.

The infestation of Argentine ants is in four areas (Map attached). Aerial application of the bait from a helicopter hopper provides the best distribution of the material and allows access in difficult terrain. Ground deployment will be utilized in sensitive areas such as within habitat near a perennial stream.

### *Environmental Planning Process*

At this time we are providing the Environmental Assessment of the effects of two alternatives: A) No Action and B) Eliminate Argentine Ants from all locations. The park and TNC are consulting with the appropriate governmental agencies and will obtain all required permits for this project prior to implementation.

### *Comments and Further Information*

Please visit the project website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ArgentineAnts> for more information. You may submit comments online on the project website or mail comments to:

Superintendent  
Channel Islands National Park  
Attn: Argentine Ant Project  
1901 Spinnaker Drive  
Ventura, California 93001

We will consider all comments submitted by February 22, 2015. Following the public comment period, the park will assess the comments and determine whether to move forward with preparation of a "Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The FONSI will be sent to those who comment on the Environmental Assessment. For additional questions regarding the project, please contact Kate Faulkner at 805-658-5709.

Sincerely,



Russell E. Galipeau, Jr.  
Superintendent

Attachment: Map of Argentine Ant distribution

## Map of Argentine Ant distribution on Santa Cruz Island

Map of Argentine ant infestations based on ground surveys on Santa Cruz Island, CA in 2010 (green), 2013 (blue). Areas treated as a field trial in 2013 (red) include 2013 Delimitation plus an additional 50 meter buffer (red).

